

## **Episode #014 Charlie Shares His Latest Inspirations (Transcript)**

Charlie Sandlan (00:02):

My fellow daydreamers, today it's just you and me. I'm going to share a few things and then we're going to get the hell out of here. So put the phone back in your pocket. Creating Behavior starts now.

Charlie Sandlan (00:12):

And hello my fellow daydreamers. We are in what I believe to be the longest fucking month of the year. It feels that way. I don't know about you guys, but August sometimes feels like a seven week month. It's that odd time, we're waiting for September. We're counting down the days for Labor Day weekend going into the fall. I don't know, I find myself always challenged by August and particularly now, because I should be on vacation. I should be recovering and rehabilitating myself from a year of teaching. And that can't happen because the whole schedule got thrown out of whack and I'm teaching through the end of August. So rather than my usual six weeks off to myself, I have two coming up. And so I don't really know how I'm going to handle that. I don't know what condition I'm going to be come mid-September, but right now I'm not looking forward to it.

Charlie Sandlan (01:43):

And I guess what I would share with you about that is there are going to be times, stretches in your life, certainly artistically, where you don't feel like doing anything creative. You don't feel like an actor. You don't want to pick up that play and read it. You don't want to work on the business shit that you've got to do. It can do a number on you because you start thinking to yourself, well, maybe I'm not really an artist. Maybe I really don't care. And I guess I would just encourage you to intervene with that, to know that it's okay. It's okay to not want to fucking work hard every once in awhile.

Charlie Sandlan (02:28):

Now, just don't give in to that. Don't let that take you down into a wormhole of depression, where you start feeling sorry for yourself and you start self-victimizing, but you can own it and be aware of it and get on the other side of it when you can. I always like to return myself to nature, to something that is beautiful. I don't know for you what that is. It could be getting up early and watching the sunrise. It could be taking a walk in the woods. But I believe connecting yourself with something that is beautiful can help recharge your soul.

Charlie Sandlan (03:11):

Now, last two weeks, I dropped two of my episodes with Maggie Flanigan, my mentor, master teacher, who many of you know and have studied under. Episode 12, she loved, her and her husband, Richard, they just complimented me in a really lovely way and getting that kind of feedback from certainly two people that have no problem giving me their honest opinion meant a great deal. Last week she listens to episode 13 and she's not pleased. She's upset. She gets back in touch with me and she did not like the anecdote I shared about being in first year and struggling with that scene all summer long. And her throwing me out, three or four times and saying to me, "Get the fuck out. Go. You're not alive." And she was upset with me. She was like, "Listen, that's not an accurate portrayal." She said that it portrays me as abusive and I don't like it.

Charlie Sandlan (04:25):

Now, I would never in a million years, describe Maggie as abusive. Tough, yes, but tough when she needed to be. I tried to defend myself. I said, "Listen, that was my story. That was my experience. It was my memory. And that's my version of it." And it actually was an incredibly important moment in my growth and my development as an actor. And she's like, "Well, it's not accurate. I would never have told you to get the fuck out the first time, maybe the third time. It would have built to get the fuck out."

Charlie Sandlan (05:02):

So let me correct the record. I don't think necessarily that my version and my memory is absolutely 100% accurate, but I'll use it. I believe fully that it was an impactful experience. That being said, I don't want anybody to think that I believe that Maggie was an abusive teacher. She was tough. She was no bullshit. She was straightforward, but she was also very, very supportive and nurturing and compassionate and empathic and patient. She had a well of patience as a teacher. And certainly those qualities, all of them, her toughness, her no bullshit, her nurturing and supportive side of her are the qualities that I have tried to instill in myself as a teacher and an artist. Maggie, I know you're listening to this. I apologize if I characterized you in any other way than what I believe you to be, which is one of the greatest teachers that this art form has ever produced.

Charlie Sandlan (06:33):

So that being said, today really is about me sharing some stuff that's been piling up on my desk. Some articles, some things that I've learned, some things that I just wanted to put on your radar, because I feel like that's part of my job is to just help get you guys to think and expand and grow. I've said this before. I loved reading the obituary section of the New York Times. I think it's important. The arts and leisure section every single day is something you should be doing. I discovered a new artist that I knew nothing about. And again, it just humbles me, the amount, the level of my ignorance. Is an artist. Her name is Luchita Hurtado. Luchita Hurtado who passed away a few weeks ago at the tender age of 99.

Charlie Sandlan (07:30):

And what I found fascinating about her and why I wanted to talk about her in particular is that she did not achieve the success and the fame and the appreciation of her collective body of work until she hit her mid nineties. This is a woman who was born in Venezuela. She moves to the United States at the age of eight, ends up spending most of her life in Los Angeles. She lived in

Mexico for a little while. She was hanging around with Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, and painting, raising a family. She was married multiple times. She had a number of children. Suffered tremendous tragedy. She lost a child in her very young years as a mother, and she also lost a son later in life. When you live to 99, you're going to lose some people that you're close to.

Charlie Sandlan (08:25):

And what happened was a friend of hers, a friend of her husband's, an art aficionado stumbled upon her work, hundreds and hundreds of paintings that were just stored away. That cover, I mean, many, many different styles of arts, surrealism, Mexican neorealism, feminism. Her work touches on environmentalism and saving planet. And she was rarely exhibited, maybe in the 1970s she had one or two kind of just small local exhibitions.

Charlie Sandlan (09:05):

She was inspired by cave paintings. She was inspired by the Southwestern United States and had a second home in Taos. And a lot of her art has a Southwestern native American ancestral kind of feel to it. A lot of self portraits, a lot of images of her body or the human form kind of mixed in to the earth. She's got this beautiful painting, you can tell like it's a body, a naked body laying on the ground, but her body is also, it looks like sand and you see it, almost like pyramids in a distance and out from the side of one of these pyramids is a foot. It's beautiful. It's sensual. It's contemplative.

Charlie Sandlan (10:01):

What I love about this story in this woman's life is that she created. She wasn't looking for fame. She wasn't looking for celebrity. She wasn't doing it for anything other than just the joy of creating. And to find that kind of success in your nineties, is unbelievable. It's extraordinary. You know we all have this idea of what we think are our path is going to be, right? Whether you go to New York, you went to Los Angeles, you get out of school, maybe you've trained, maybe you just got your undergrad, you

got your BFA or your MFA, or you finished a program like mine, and you have this idea of what you think your career is going to be. And it doesn't work out that way, that I will promise you. It's going to go the way it goes.

Charlie Sandlan (10:55):

If you would have told me at the age of 30, that I was going to be an acting teacher, I would've told you, you were fucking crazy. I was an actor. It's the only thing I ever wanted to be. And really it wasn't until I hit 35, that the whole course of my life changed. And I realized my life's purpose and everything goes from there, but I would never have thought that this is what I would be doing with my life. And so when I read something like this, when I discover someone like Luchita Hurtado and her perseverance and her just commitment to the work and how that kind of, I guess, in terms of success paid off, at such a tail end of her life, I just find it very inspiring.

Charlie Sandlan (11:40):

And I came across one quote of hers that really stuck with me. It resonated with me and I'll share it with you. She said this, "Everything in this world I find, I'm related to." And certainly as an actor, as an artist, I think that's part of our job is to try to relate to as much of the human condition as we can. To relate to the world as much as we can. To open ourselves up to the world as much as we can. And I know I've said this before, you need empathy towards human suffering and you need intellectual curiosity to feed yourself. So please check out her work. It's beautiful. Learn something about her and add this artist to your reservoir of knowledge.

Charlie Sandlan (12:31):

And when I talk about empathy towards human suffering, understanding what's going on in the world, I've been wanting to talk about this for a while and it just hadn't made it into the show. I think we take for granted. I mean, we really do, how lucky we are to have the freedom to say and do whatever the fuck we want. A

lot of people on this planet don't have that luxury and they pay very high price for attempting to do so.

Charlie Sandlan (13:03):

And so I just wanted to mention about the death of an Egyptian filmmaker, Shady Habash. This was back in May when Shady passed away. He was a filmmaker. He was only 24 years old and he was in Egypt and he had the audacity to make a music video that mocked President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. That's what he did. He mocked him in this particular video as a date, the fruit. He was arrested and he spent two years in an Egyptian maximum security prison. Now, I think we can just imagine what an Egyptian maximum security prison is like, what he went through, the beatings, the torture, and he died in prison. Held in that prison for three years without a trial, without any attempt to be able to defend himself, just scooped up off the street and basically slow murdered for expressing himself artistically.

Charlie Sandlan (14:24):

This is the kind of stuff that you need to be discovering, feeding yourself because it's an injustice and that kind of injustice can bring you to life. It can give you something to call upon when you're trying to relate to something. He was not the only person that was arrested over this music video. Ramy Essam, who was the musician that also helped put this together. The writer of the song was also arrested and charged. And they also were arrested the guy that just set up the Facebook page. I mean, they will crush and squelch any kind of artistic expression. I just wanted you to learn about Shady Habash, watch that video and look what cost him his life.

Charlie Sandlan (15:19):

And since we are on the subject of injustice right now, there's a lot of it going on in the world. I think you need to pay attention and know what is going on in Belarus. In the last month, well over 6,000, 7,000 people have been detained. They have been arrested. They have been tortured for protesting the presidential

election, which clearly has been rigged and the people are upset. They're angry. And so they'd been expressing themselves. And what is coming out in the news is so disturbing, so upsetting. The torture of these protestors in these Belarus prisons, you can go to the Twitter account of Franak Viačorka, and I'm just going to spell out his name. You can go to the website and get the links for this episode, but Franak Viačorka, F-R-A-N-A-K last name V-I-A-C-O-R-K-A, his Twitter account, you can watch this video.

Charlie Sandlan (16:35):

He was sitting outside of a detention center in Minsk, where thousands are being kept and held. And he sat outside this detention center and he had a video camera and he recorded. And what you hear over, I don't know, four or five minutes are the screams of people being beat and being tortured. Screams in the middle of the night. It is unbelievably upsetting. It is unnerving. It is disturbing. I've personally never heard anything like that because usually we get that kind of shit in films. And we know that it's not real, but when you watch his video, you can also go to the BuzzFeed, there's a great article in BuzzFeed from, I think it's August 14th, where you can drill down and listen to this. It's just another prime example of our inhumanity to each other.

Charlie Sandlan (17:40):

And it just starts your imagination wondering. You can close your eyes. You can listen. Because there's multiple people involved here. There's the person that's being beaten and tortured. And then you've got to imagine the people that are inflicting the pain, whether that's one person, two people, what they're using. And a lot of the young protestors that are getting out, that are being released, and they're showing the bruises and the beatings on their body. It's horrific. And this is for expressing themselves.

Charlie Sandlan (18:15):

We've got to be as artist tuned in, piped in, to this kind of injustice, because if you are a creative, this is the fertile ground that can launch you into a project, that can launch you into a poem, can

launch you into a film, a play that you can just start to pour out of you, when you start feeding yourself like this. It's really upsetting. It makes me appreciate the fact that I can sit here and talk about that big fat, orange fucking cock sucker, who is slowly destroying our country and not fear repercussions or retribution, not fear being picked up off the street and thrown into a prison.

Charlie Sandlan (19:07):

And so when we see kind of the shit that goes on in Portland, where these unidentifiable law enforcement officers are able to just grab people off the street and throw them into unmarked vans and hold them, we need to be scared shitless about that. And as artists, as I think people that are tasked, as ultimately, and I think we are tasked with the responsibility of standing up and bearing witness and testifying to what we see and what we hear. We can't let that go unnoticed because there's not a big leap between what was happening in Portland and what is happening in Belarus. And we need to be mindful of that.

Charlie Sandlan (20:02):

Now, I don't want this whole episode to be doom and gloom. I'm not trying to depress you, but I do have something else that it actually might depress you. The Hollywood reporter released the top five highest grossing actors in America. I'm just going to read them off to you, and you can contemplate what this means for you personally. But at the top of the list is the Rock, Dwayne Johnson, that pro wrestler who is built like a marble statue. He's coming in at number one, making around \$23.5 million a project. Then you've got, Ryan Reynolds, number two. Then I guess we can at least confirm the teenage bigot and racist, Mark Wahlberg, from Boston is coming in at number three. You've got the unbelievably banal and boring, Ben Affleck, at number four. And then we're going to round out the top five with Vin Diesel. So those are your top five highest paid actors in Hollywood. I guess for anybody that has feelings about art and about the craft, I guess like me, that might depress you.



Charlie Sandlan (21:36):

Going in a completely different direction here. I don't know how Ellen DeGeneres comes out the other side of this particular problem that she has. And the reason why I want to bring it up because it's been in the news, it's been talked about, the fact that, wow, I guess we realized that she's a bitch or we realized that she's not nice. That she's mean. That this whole facade that she has put on over however many decades she's been doing her show, is really a lie. That she doesn't treat people well. Now, that may or may not necessarily be fully accurate, but that's what's out there now. And she is going to have to deal with that.

Charlie Sandlan (22:26):

I guess the reason why I'm bringing this up is because there were very few things that you can control certainly in this business. And that's this, the quality of your work, which you are in complete control of, and your reputation. And I think that both of those are very important. Listen, we're all going to do things. We're all going to make mistakes. We're all going to grow, hopefully, and be reflective on parts of our character that we would like to improve upon. But one thing you've got to be, certainly in this business, is just decent and nice to everybody you work with.

Charlie Sandlan (23:08):

And as an actor, if you show up on set, you show up into a rehearsal for theater, be nice, be nice to everybody. Be nice to the crew. Have an appreciation for how hard their job is. For the boom operator, who's holding this boom mic over his or her head for 15 hours over the course of the day, the AD or the PA's that are just getting yelled at and ordered around all day. The people that are moving lights, everything that's involved and putting a piece of art together. Be nice to people. It's a collaborative art and people talk and you can get a really bad reputation really quick.

Charlie Sandlan (23:59):

Now, it's Ellen Show, she's one on the call sheet, nothing gets done without her. So she probably can get away with treating

people the way she wanted to. But at some point that is going to come back to haunt you. If I could just give you some advice, really be nice, be decent, be considerate, and don't get caught gossiping. It's an insidious human characteristic. Of course we do it. It's how we learn about people. It's how we understand our world in a micro level. But it's not good. And when you gossip, it gets back to the other person and you want to try to just eliminate as many uncomfortable problems for yourself as a professional. So just take that for what it's worth.

Charlie Sandlan (25:01):

And now let me move on to something that just, I don't know, it made me laugh and it made me appreciate the importance of ideas. I'm always talking to my students. I know I've mentioned it here on this show that if you're going to be really good, as an artist, if you're going to be a good actor, you have to have ideas. You have to have them and you have to have the courage to do something with it, to actually implement the idea. And I think that's really what separates the successful creator from the non-successful, right? Because we all have ideas. How many of you have been sitting around going, Oh, I've got this great idea. I've got this idea for a book. I've got this idea for a play. I've got this idea for a script. I've got this idea for a show and you don't do anything about it?

Charlie Sandlan (25:50):

The successful people who have ideas actually do something with them. There's this new book that's out. It's actually been written about here. It's quite popular now. It's called, Men to Avoid in Art and Life by the Detroit based writer, Nicole Tersigni, T-E-R-S-I-G-N-I, Nicole Tersigni. And basically what this is, is a book where she has taken 18th, 17th century art, and she has captioned it in a way that catches the stupidity of men and the misogyny that women have been subjected to. And this idea of her sprouted from the fact that she was scrolling through Twitter one day and she saw this guy explaining to a woman, her own joke back to

her, and she could relate to this. She said, that this had happened to her many times in life. And I'm sure every woman that's listening to this can appreciate this.

Charlie Sandlan (26:57):

So she googles, women surrounded by men. Because sometimes that's what women feel like, she said, when you're online. And so she stumbled upon this 17th century oil painting. And in this painting, it's a painting of a woman who's bearing one of her breasts in the middle of just kind of this group, the scrum of bald man. So she took that painting and she put a caption to it. And the caption was this, maybe if I take my tit out, they will stop explaining my own joke back to me. And then that led to another picture and it led to another picture. And what came out of this is a book where she has taken 16th, 17th, 18th century painting, and she has captioned it.

Charlie Sandlan (27:55):

And what I also love, and this is why I'm sharing this with you, because it made me think about character, about ideas for approaching a part, if it calls on it. She divides men up into categories. The first one is called the mansplainer. And that's the guy who has to explain things in a condescending way, because you as a woman are too stupid to understand what I'm talking about. I think everybody has heard about that, the mansplainer.

Charlie Sandlan (28:26):

The other one that she talks about it is called the concern troll. Now the concern troll, approaches a woman with a sense of worry, a sense of concern, because there's something going on with you, but it's not really sincere. And then we have the comedian. The comedian now is the unfunny person who was convinced of his funniness. And if you don't laugh or if you don't find what he's saying funny, then of course, then he goes into the man explainer and has to explain the joke because you don't get it, because clearly it's funny.

Charlie Sandlan (29:03):

And then we have the sexpert. Now the sexpert is that heterosexual guy who thinks he has all the answers to sex and knows the woman's body better than she does. That's the sexpert. I'm sure many of you have met him. And then we have the patronizer. I certainly, when I read this, I thought, Oh yeah, that feels close to home. And the patronizer, he patronizes women by harping on their feelings. Oh, well, listen, I can't talk to you if you're going to act hysterical. I can't talk to you if you're going to be so emotional. You need to calm down. And I just thought, well, if you're approaching a part, any one of those things, the mansplainer, the concern troll, the comedian, the sexpert, patronizer, can give you a kind of a way to launch off into something. So check out the book.

Charlie Sandlan (30:00):

Now I want to talk about someone who is impressed the hell out of me. Her story is incredible and she's doing amazing work. Groundbreaking work really if you ask me, and that's Michaela Coel. Now Michaela Coel is the star, the writer, the producer of what I think is one of the best shows on television right now. And that's HBO's *I May Destroy You*. Before I talk about just the show itself and what it's meant to me over the first, six, seven episodes that I've watched so far, is the guts and the belief in herself that Michaela exhibited. She was offered and you can read this, it's a great Vulture article about Michaela. She was offered a million dollars by Netflix for *I May Destroy You*.

Charlie Sandlan (30:54):

But they weren't going to give her any creative control. They were going to take complete ownership of it. She didn't have any copyright percentage. She had nothing, but they were going to give her a million dollars. And she tried, she tried to negotiate with them. She tried to get 5%, she tried to get two and a half percent, she tried to get 2%, and they said, "No, we don't do that." And then she found out that CAA, now CAA was her agent. I mean, if you're with CAA, you can't really get much higher than that. One

of the biggest, most powerful agencies in this business and found out that CAA, her agents, were going to get a nice little kickback on the backend if they made this Netflix deal. And so CAA had been pushing her to sign the deal. It's a million dollars, take it. And she said, "Fuck you."

Charlie Sandlan (31:49):

She fired CAA. And she took her show. And now she's ended up on BBC1 and HBO, and she's got full, complete, creative control. She's executive producer. And it's just a testament to when an artist knows and believes that they have something of value, that they value their own work, and that it's not about the money. It is an incredible show. It's about a woman who was out partying with friends and realizes the next day that she was roofied and raped. And the whole show is the unfolding of this realization and piecing it all together. So it's disturbing on that front, but she's also pushing boundaries in a way that I have personally not seen on television with homosexuality, with sex as it's portrayed on television. There's a very just ... And this is the white guy in me. So this also just getting tapped into my unconscious racism and my bias.

Charlie Sandlan (33:03):

But there was a scene where three black men are coming together to fuck. And two of them are really into it. One of the guys really isn't, he ends up checking out, but you see in very raw, very vulnerable way, these two gay men fucking each other. I've never seen something like that on television, certainly not two black men. And certainly not in the way it was portrayed. And my white, just middle aged sensibility, I was uncomfortable watching it. And I was able to step out of myself and say, wow, you're really uncomfortable here. This is really challenging you to be open and to take in. And I was just incredibly impressed with the actors, because that was not an easy scene to shoot. The material is exceptionally well done. It's well-written. It's a great show. You have to put this on the top of your list, I May Destroy You.

Charlie Sandlan (34:14):

And you need to know and you need to follow Michaela Coel. You need to read about her. You need to learn about what she's doing and you need to champion not just her, but other artists like her. And hopefully you can find some inspiration from her story. Now I'm ready to wrap up the show, but I thought I would end today with a quote. And this is a quote from Elizabeth Gilbert, her lovely book, her incredible, insightful and honest book, Big Magic. I've said many times that I think you need to disabuse yourself, if you hold onto this cliché of being a suffering artist. I don't think it's helpful, but it's romanticized in our culture. And I'm going to read a little bit from this book and what Elizabeth Gilbert has to say.

Charlie Sandlan (35:13):

"In contemporary Western civilization, the most common creative contract still seems to be one of suffering. This is the contract that says, I shall destroy myself and everyone around me in an effort to bring forth my inspiration, and my martyrdom shall be the badge of my creative legitimacy.

Charlie Sandlan (35:34):

The Tormented Artist. You will find no shortage of role models. To honor their example, follow these fundamental rules: Drink as much as you possibly can; sabotage all your relationships; wrestle so vehemently against yourself that you come up bloodied every time; express constant dissatisfaction with your work; jealously compete against your peers; begrudge anybody else's victories; proclaim yourself cursed (not blessed) by your talents; attach your sense of self-worth to external rewards; be arrogant when you are successful and self-pitying when you fail; honor darkness above light; die young; blame creativity for having killed you." End quote.

Charlie Sandlan (36:33):

Well, my fellow daydreamers thank you for sticking around. Keeping that phone in your pocket, in your purse, in your fanny pack. Follow the show, subscribe to it, leave it a review, particularly on iTunes, it would help a great deal. You can go to

my website, <https://www.creatingbehaviorpodcast.com> You can leave me a message. All you got to do is press a button. You can follow Creating Behavior on Instagram @creatingbehavior. You can follow the Maggie Flanigan studio @maggieflaniganstudio. Lawrence Trailer, thank you for the music as always. My friends, it's August. It's a long month. You can be lazy, that's all right, but at some point, get your ass up off the fucking couch, play full out with yourself and don't ever settle for second best. My name is Charlie Sandlan. Peace.